


The
Melville Society
N E W S L E T T E R

WINTER, 1960

Volume XV

Number 4



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REPORT FROM CHICAGO

The annual meeting of the Society, coinciding as has been traditional with the M.L.A. meeting, was held in Chicago on Monday, December 28th.

Two members, Phillip Durham of the University of California and Walter Bezanson of Rutgers, presented papers which it is hoped that those who could not be present will soon see in print. Phil Durham gave a highly interesting picture of some of the problems Weaver had faced as an early editor of *Melville*, and Walt Bezanson shared with the Society a number of insights which have come out of his editing of *Clarel*.

At the business meeting, reading of the minutes and the treasurer's report was dispensed with, since Tyrus Hillway had found it impossible to attend.

Merrell Davis was elected to the Executive Committee, which means that he will succeed Richard Fogle, who will succeed Tyrus Hillway as President.

Richard Stavig was elected Secretary-Treasurer, and upon his shoulders has fallen the responsibility for publishing the current *Newsletter*.

In addition to this, the Society set up an Editorial Committee to consist of a Chairman elected by the Society and any persons appointed by that Chairman and empowered the Committee to proceed with publications for the Society. It was the sense of the meeting that the Chairman should appoint the members of the Executive Committee to the Editorial Committee, partly to avoid duplication of duties, although he need not limit his committee membership to those persons.

Harry Hayford was elected to Chairmanship of this Committee. The other members include Tyrus Hillway, Richard Fogle, Merrell Davis, Wilson Heflin, Richard Stavig, and Laurence Barrett—the members of the Executive Committee.

The Society deliberately left the responsibilities of this Committee open and set no limits on format or content of Society publications, believing that the Committee should have power to go about in any direction it felt would best serve the Society.

The President read telegraphed greetings from Wilson Heflin, who had been

unable to attend, and William Braswell moved that the Society express sincerest appreciation to Tyrus Hillway for the work he has done as secretary, treasurer, and editor of the *Newsletter*.

Since the meeting, I have written Tyrus, ceding to him the responsibilities of the Presidency with, as the law books say, all the rights and privileges thereto. I know we are going to have a good year.

Laurence Barrett

SOCIETY OFFICERS 1960

Executive Committee:

Laurence Barrett (term expires 1960)

Wilson L. Heflin (term expires 1961)

Tyrus Hillway (term expires 1962)

Richard H. Fogle (term expires 1963)

Merrell R. Davis (term expires 1964)

President, 1960: Tyrus Hillway

Secretary, 1960-62: Richard Stavig

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 1959

Balance on hand,

January 1, 1959\$ 93.67

Income (all sources), 1959160.24

Less expenses

(including bibliography)125.27

Balance on Hand,

December 31, 1959\$128.64

Tyrus Hillway, Acting Secretary

ANNOUNCEMENTS

As announced above, the change in the Society's publication policy involves the termination of the *Newsletter* in its present format. With this number, then, the *Newsletter* as you have known it ceases to exist. In its place will appear society publications of different types, edited under the supervision of Harry Hayford. At present Mr. Hayford is not ready to announce specific future publication plans, but these will be forthcoming soon.

The 1960 annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, December 28, from 8:45 to 10:00 A.M. and will take place in the Junior Room of the Sylvania Hotel in Philadelphia. Program suggestions or items of business should be sent to Tyrus Hillway, Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.

Some copies of the Society's *Melville Bibliography* 1952-57 are still available and may be obtained from Mr. Hillway.

The price: one dollar per copy plus thirty cents for postage and handling.

A few copies of another Melville bibliography are also available. *Melville Studies: A Tentative Bibliography*, compiled by Norman Jarrard and donated to the society, makes no claims to completeness but contains in its forty-three pages a wealth of information for any Melville student or scholar. The studies are listed by year of publication and cover the period from 1846 to 1959. Copies are free to members (please include thirty cents in stamps to cover mailing costs) and may be obtained from Richard Stavig, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

William T. Stafford, Purdue University, is reportedly at work on a Wadsworth research guide, "'Billy Budd' and the Critics."

Due for April publication by the University of Chicago Press is Merlin Bowen's *The Long Encounter: Self and Experience in Melville*.

A MELVILLE NOTE

The National Era Review of *White Jacket*

In *The National Era* for April 25, 1850, appeared the following notice of *White Jacket*:

"In this volume we have *reality*, not *romance*. In ninety-three brief chapters, the author paints as many distinct scenes of life on board a man-of-war. There is plenty of incident, but it is made subservient to the very laudable purpose of exhibiting the condition of our navy, its discipline, the treatment of sailors, &c.

Facts concerning the use of rum and of the cat-o'-nine-tails are detailed, which must arrest the attention of the nation. The book should be placed in the hands of every member of Congress. It gives clearer insight into the abuses prevalent in our navy, and a better conception of the necessary remedies, than any work within our knowledge. It entitles its author to the warmest thanks of every American interested in the improvement of the condition and elevation of the character of our sailors."

In paragraph two the anonymous author says: "The book should be placed in

the hands of every member of Congress." By a coincidence, the immediately preceding item, a notice of *Cuba and the Cubans*, begins as follows: "We observed, the other day, a copy of this work laid upon the desk of every member of Congress," the question of annexing Cuba being then under discussion. This bears out the assertion of C. R. Anderson that "it would have been quite in keeping with Congressional custom to bring in such a document [as *White Jacket*] as evidence."² The accidental juxtaposition of these reviews may have helped to create the impression that *White Jacket* was distributed to members of Congress, as asserted by Rear-Admiral Samuel R. Franklin,³ despite the absence of confirming evidence.

The opening sentence of the review also deserves comment: "In this volume we have *reality*, not *romance*." If the anonymous notice was written by the editor of *The National Era*, as seems likely, this was no idle statement. According to DAB, Dr. Gamaliel Bailey (1807-1859) had in his youth sailed before the mast to China, shortly after his graduation from Jefferson Medical College in 1827. An outbreak of the plague later elevated Bailey to the position of ship's surgeon. As an intelligent young man, new to the ways of the sea, Bailey no doubt saw essentially what Melville was to see a few years later. The conscience which made Bailey so able an abolitionist would have been similarly aroused.

B. R. McElderry, Jr.
University of Southern
California

¹ IV, 66, col. 4. *The National Era* was an abolitionist newspaper, published in Washington, D. C., from 1847 to 1860, and best known for its serial publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin. See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (New York, 1930), p. 457. The only reference to this review known to me is to a quotation from it in the Honolulu *Friend* on August 1 (Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log*, New York, 1951, I, 382). Willard Thorp in his *Representative Selections* (New York, 1938), does not include it in his list of reviews of *White Jacket*, p. cxliv.

² "A Reply to Herman Melville's *White Jacket* by Rear-Admiral Thomas O. Selfridge, Sr.," *AL*, VII (May, 1935), 142.

³ Quoted by Anderson, p. 142.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER

IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Membership is two dollars per year and includes all services of the Society. Associate membership (non-voting) is one dollar per year and includes all issues of the Newsletter. Address Richard Stavig, secretary, at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

NOTICE

THIS PUBLICATION CEASED WITH

1960

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is the only quarterly for members of the
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Society. Address: Richard B. Sewall, Secretary, at Kalamazoo Uni-
versity, Kalamazoo, Michigan.